



A. XLII.

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J. H. Lyford

Sept 1st 1839

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19/d

37. B. 15769



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ESSAYS;
ON
CONVERSATION,
AND ON
QUACKERY.

LONDON:
JOHN W. PARKER, WEST STRAND.

M.DCCC.XXXVI.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Essays contain the substance of some Lectures which were delivered at the Bath Literary Institution. In committing them to the Press, the Author has complied with the suggestions of those who, having seen them in Manuscript, considered it advisable to place them within reach in a readable form, if haply any portion of the reading public should deem the subjects of sufficient interest to occupy some small degree of attention.

CONVERSATION.

SYNOPSIS.

DEFINITION.—GENERAL RULES OF CONVERSATION.—
GENERAL FAULTS OF CONVERSATION.—CHARACTER-
ISTIC TRAITS OF MEN EMINENTLY GIFTED WITH
CONVERSATIONAL POWERS.—SWIFT'S LUDICROUS ANA-
LOGY BETWEEN CARVING AND CONVERSATION.

CANONS OF CONVERSATION.

- I. THERE SHOULD BE A DUE ATTENTION TO TIME,
PLACE, AND PERSONS, IN CONVERSATION.
- II. NO ONE SHOULD MONOPOLIZE CONVERSATION.
- III. REPETITIONS OF STORIES AND SIMILAR REMARKS
SHOULD BE AVOIDED AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.
- IV. QUOTATIONS SHOULD NOT BE INDULGED IN TOO
MUCH, AND NEVER IN A LANGUAGE UNKNOWN
OR ILL UNDERSTOOD BY THE MAJORITY OF THE
COMPANY.
- V. SELF, AND ONE'S OWN PROPERTY, AND FAMILY
CONNEXIONS, SHOULD BE INTRODUCED AS SPAR-
INGLY AS POSSIBLE.
- VI. CONVERSATION SHOULD NOT BE TOO PROFESSIONAL
OR CONTROVERSIAL.
- VII. IT SHOULD NOT BE A MERE INTERCHANGE OF RE-
CIPROCAL SCANDAL.
- VIII. IT SHOULD BE CARRIED ON WITH MUTUAL COUR-
TESY, AVOIDING CLAMOROUS TONES AND EXTRA-
VAGANT GESTICULATION.

CONVERSATION.

Usque sibi constans ratio pronuntiat omni
Quæ recte sentit tempore, gente, loco.

CONVERSATION, which may be defined as the familiar oral interchange of extemporaneous ideas, is the great characteristic privilege of man. It bestows the highest intellectual pleasure that a cultivated mind can enjoy; it animates the dull, comforts the afflicted, cheers the despondent, enlightens the ignorant, exhilarates youth, and tranquillizes old age.

Can a faculty which is capable of diffusing happiness by such various means, be cultivated by rules, and acquired by education? This is a subject well worthy of inquiry. Our great moral poet Cowper, thinks it may be so acquired; he says—

Though Nature weigh our talents, and dispense
To every man his modicum of sense,
And Conversation, in its better part,
May be esteemed a gift, and not an art ;
Yet much depends, as in the tiller's toil,
On culture, and the sowing of the soil.
Words learned by rote a parrot may rehearse,
But talking is not always to converse.
Not more distinct from harmony divine,
The constant creaking of a country sign.
As alphabets in ivory employ,
Hour after hour, the yet unlettered boy,
Sorting and puzzling with a deal of glee,
Those seeds of science called A B C D,
So language in the mouths of the adult,
(Witness its insignificant result)
Too often proves an implement of play,
A toy to sport with and pass time away.

The highest objects of the best converser are to instruct and to amuse. For this purpose he must possess not only information, but also wit or humour ; a pleasing facility of communicating entertaining ideas ; and, what is not least, a polite attention to what is said by the person with whom he is conversing. An agreeable voice, and vigorous flow of animal spirits, seem also to be necessary to the perfection of animated conversation.

Here, then, rules will not apply, and probably they can never be applied to this art, (if it be an art,) further than to point out, as in eloquence and elocution, rather what faults to avoid, than what excellencies to attain, or the means by which they may be attained.

Besides the grand law which would confine it within the bounds of religion and good morals, the following Canons of Conversation would pass, I should think, in polite company, *nem. diss.*

I. There should be a due attention to *time*, *place*, and *persons*, in conversation.

II. No one should monopolize conversation.

III. Repetitions of stories and similar remarks should be avoided as much as possible.

IV. Quotations should not be indulged in too much, and never in a language unknown or ill understood by the majority of the company.

V. Self, and one's own property, and family connexions, should be introduced as sparingly as possible.

VI. Conversation should not be too professional, or controversial.

VII. It should not be a mere interchange of reciprocal scandal.

VIII. It should be carried on with mutual courtesy, avoiding clamorous tones and extravagant gesticulation.

Let us consider the necessity of observing the first rule,—

A DUE ATTENTION TO TIME, PLACE, AND
PERSONS, IN CONVERSATION.

As to *time*, how frequently do we see this rule violated most grossly.

Who that has mixed much in society has not witnessed the violence of party politics served up at a dinner-table, and the mysteries of theology dealt out with the cards.

When party politics ran very high during the French Revolution, the subject of the decapitation of Charles the First was introduced at a dinner-table in Oxford. A very quiet man, who usually avoided all political discussions, ventured to say something in extenuation of Cromwell's guilt, urging the insincerity of Charles, and the strong reason to think, that if he had not been beheaded, a dreadful

destruction would have ensued of all his opponents. His opposite neighbour, a violent tory, on hearing this, immediately left his chair, and, kneeling down, offered a fervent prayer for the conversion of the traitor who had last spoken. He then quitted the table, and no entreaties could prevail on him to return to his seat.

Now it happened that the man whom, in his thoughtless violence, he had been so furiously condemning, was, in reality, a very decided tory, and made an apology for Cromwell only in an unpremeditated fit of candour.

Lord North, the prime-minister, had great address in diverting the stream of political conversation into a current of lighter subjects, which flowed with less turbulent agitation, saying, that controversy at meal-times was bad for the digestion.

At the tables of our more lively and irritable neighbours, the Irish, dreadful scenes of confusion have ensued from the violation of this law in conversing, and the tumult of O'Rourke's noble feast, celebrated in the humourous verses of Swift, is but a type of what *has* been but too often exemplified in that country, even in the highest circles.

If it be true that the tunes of obscene songs should not be adapted to sacred words, because of the vicious and discordant associations arising therefrom, it is obviously true, that secular conversation on the price of meat, or the brilliant display at the last assembly, or the newest fashion of a bonnet, are unfit subjects of discussion in the pews of a church. Not less absurd would be a religious controversy at a fish-stall.

Subjects which require deep thinking and long explanation are to be avoided at our hours of relaxation and amusement—at meal-times, or concerts, or dances. Who, too, that had common sense would propound an algebraic problem over a bottle of wine, or discuss the distinctions between matter and spirit at a theatre?

I remember a story told of the late Dr. Thomas Warton, the poet-laureate, who was at no time fond of minute detail in conversation, being asked by an old lady for an account of all the particulars of his grandmother's death, and this when he was very intent on a very interesting slice of venison. "Madam," said the poet, abruptly, "she died suddenly!" This stopped all further investigation, and left him in the quiet enjoyment of his dinner.

The next condition in this rule is a due attention to the character of the *persons* with whom you are conversing.

How many serious results have ensued from not observing this circumstance? Sarcastic ridicule of national characters in a mixed company, unknown to the talker, has led to fatal duels: and levity of talk in the company of grave characters, has ruined the prospects of the thoughtless imprudent jester.

I myself witnessed, at Mayence, a severe reproof given by a Dutchman to an Englishman, for an imprudence of this kind. The latter said to his neighbour, whom (from his peculiar facility of talking English without the least of a foreign accent) he mistook for a fellow-countryman, that he had lately travelled through Holland; “And what did you think of that country?” inquired the Dutchman. “Why,” replied the Englishman, “I felt much disposed to say with Voltaire, on quitting it,—

Adieu! canards, canaux, canaille.”

“Do you know another witty saying of Voltaire, respecting the English?” said the Dutchman, who was not a little piqued at this reflection on his

country. “‘*Les Anglais ont toute la dureté de leur acier sans le poli.*’”

An Englishman, who had imprudently made some reflections on the disregard of truth amongst the Irish, was thus chastised by his Hibernian neighbour. “I can give an exception, sir, to your rule. You are a mighty impudent fellow, sir; that is *true*, and I am an Irishman!”

It is not less necessary to consider the rank, kindred, and circumstances of the individual with whom you are conversing. . Most readers of anecdotes are acquainted with the blunder told of Bishop Burnet, who was a very greedy and incautious gossip, though a very learned, honest, and pious man. He requested the Duke of Marlborough to introduce him to Prince Eugene. The duke, knowing Burnet's character, consented, on condition of his speaking when the prince addressed him. This was agreed to, and Prince Eugene, on the bishop being presented, asked him if he had ever been at Paris. “Yes,” said he, “the first time I was there was when the Comtesse de Soissons was apprehended on suspicion of having suborned a villain to administer poison.” The prince imme-

diately turned from him with horror,—for the Comtesse de Soissons was his mother.

Another, not less known, is that of the unfortunate gentleman who asked Lord North who that uncommonly ugly lady opposite to him was. “That uncommonly ugly lady, sir, is my wife.” “No, my lord, I mean the one to her right,” “That, sir, is my daughter.”

Dr. Kennicott, soon after the commencement of his great work, the *Hebrew Bible*, was travelling to Oxford in the common stage-coach. The conversation happened to turn upon his erudite labours. One person inquired what success they were likely to have. “Not much,” replied a second; “but what can you expect from the son of a cobbler?” “I beg your pardon,” observed Kennicott mildly, to the no small astonishment and confusion of the gentleman: “my father was always reckoned a good shoemaker, and never *cobbled* his work.”

A gentleman travelling in a public coach, in a discussion on the merits of modern poets; proceeded to criticise one of considerable fame, in rather severe language, and concluded with saying he thought he had written quite enough. “I think so too!” said a gentleman who stepped out to quit the coach.

What was the horror of the critic, on hearing the gentleman addressed by the name of the poet whom he had been satirizing, and to find, in truth, that he was the identical individual! His only consolation was that they were no longer to be fellow-travellers.

A barrister flattered Kean exorbitantly to his face, saying he excelled all other comic actors he had ever seen. Kean enjoyed the praise, and began talking about the circuit which the barrister went. "Pray," said Kean, "were you ever at the theatre at Exeter?" "Yes," replied the barrister, "and saw there an ugly little croaking wretch of an actor taking the very part in which you so much excel." "That actor, sir," said Kean, "was your humble servant." The barrister, with admirable presence of mind, exclaimed, "Is it possible, sir, that you should have improved so much in every particular in so short a time?"

Reynolds the dramatist says, that when he was once in the theatre, witnessing the performance of his tragedy of *Werter*, his next neighbour turned to him, and said, "Did you ever hear such wretched stuff? If you will help to hiss and damn the play, sir, you shall have my hearty support." Reynolds

concealed his authorship, and changed his situation.

In conversing with superiors, the extremes of impudent familiarity, sheepish bashfulness, and cringing servility are to be avoided. We have heard of an impertinent dandy, not many years ago, who requested the Prince of Wales (afterwards George IV.) to ring the bell for him. His royal highness complied, and, ordering the gentleman's carriage, gave directions to the servants not to admit him again to the palace.

I strongly suspect that Swift's impudence of manners with his noble patrons prevented his elevation to the English bench of bishops. The ministers of Queen Anne admired, and were glad to make use of his talents; but they did not like to raise to a level of equality with themselves one who showed little decorum in addressing his superiors.

The other extremes—a sheepish bashfulness, and cringing servility in conversation, are continually to be noticed. They result from bad education, and from a rustic ignorance of the manners of good society, or from interested motives, or an over-anxiety to give satisfaction. In one of our late

comedies is a very good piece of ridicule of the sheepishly bashful character, in that of a young gentleman who is represented as waiting in the ante-room of a lord. He studies the words of his first address, and adjusts his clothes, but, in practising his best bow, overturns an inkstand on the table. Anxious to conceal the effects of his awkwardness, he mops up the ink with his handkerchief, with which, just as the lord enters, he wipes his face, and thus becomes so ridiculous a figure as to excite the lord's astonishment and laughter, and to overwhelm himself with unutterable confusion.

I pity bashful men, who feel the pain
Of fancied scorn, and undeserved disdain,
And bear the marks, upon a blushing face,
Of needless shame and undeserved disgrace :
Our sensibilities are so acute,
That fear of being silent makes us mute.
We sometimes think we could a speech produce,
Much to the purpose, were our tongues but loose ;
But, being tied, it dies upon the lip,
Faint as a chicken's note that has the pip ;
Our wasted oil unprofitably burns,
Like hidden lamps in old sepulchral urns.

Sir Archy Mac-Sarcasm is a very happy representation of cringing servility with superiors.

In speaking of conversation out of place, I forgot to mention the fault of stopping a friend in the street, during a high wind, or a shower of rain, or when he is in a hurry to proceed, and bestowing all your tediousness on him with emphatic zeal. For, alas, but too often—

The emphatic speaker dearly loves to oppose,
 In contact inconvenient, nose to nose :
 As if the gnomon on his neighbour's phiz,
 Touched with a magnet, had attracted his.
 His whispered theme, dilated and at large,
 Proves, after all, a wind-gun's airy charge,—
 An extract of his diary,—no more,—
 A tasteless journal of the day before :
 He walked abroad, o'ertaken in the rain,
 Called on a friend, drank tea, stept home again,
 Resumed his purpose, had a world of talk
 With one he stumbled on, but lost his walk.
 I interrupt him with a sudden bow,—
 ' Adieu, dear sir, lest you should lose one now !'

Our second canon is,—

THAT NO ONE SHOULD MONOPOLIZE
 CONVERSATION.

This is a very gross and a very common fault in society. It proceeds not only from inordinate vanity, but frequently from a stupid inability to com-

press ideas in a few words, and from a dulness of tact in not perceiving the weariness of the auditors.

Dr. Johnson, Gibbon, Parr, Madame de Staël, and others, have been renowned monopolizers in conversations; probably, in part, from a love of communicating instruction, from a fulness of knowledge, and thoughts which could not be confined, from a pleasure in making fine sentences, and a wish to excite admiration; and in part, possibly, in the belief that their colloquial remarks would not perish, but be handed down to posterity.

In an eager contest for this monopoly at a French *conversazione*, one of the wits said to his neighbour, whilst watching to get the parole from a tedious haranguer, *Ah! s'il crache il se perd*. Many persons who exhibit this fault to an extreme degree are unconscious of it.

Celia, whose tongue you hear a mile hence,
Prates half an hour in praise of silence.

The most talkative man I know, whose tongue becomes absolutely parched from volubility, has complained to his wife in my presence that she will never let him speak.

I shall incidentally remark that one might expect that those who talk most and best in public, would

shine equally in conversation; but this, I believe, will not always be found to be verified in fact. I shall add one more ludicrous instance of the sin of engrossing conversation.

A friend who had attended a long time to a tedious harangue on the subject of tithes, was so tired of it that he went to the theatre, saw the play and farce, and returned to his party, but found only two persons left, and heard one of them say to the tithe-orator, ‘Well, well, I give up Melchisedek.’ Finding that the other had made no further progress than this, he thought it high time to leave him again, and go to bed.

In the incidental remark respecting the conversational powers of public orators, I had in my mind two living characters to whom I have understood it would particularly apply. I believe neither Pitt nor Fox were particularly brilliant in conversation; but Burke was great in all things, and eminently so in this. Moore says, “the conversation of Burke must have been like the procession of a Roman triumph, exhibiting power and riches at every step; occasionally mingling the low Fescennine jest with the lofty music of the march, but glittering all over with the spoils of a ransacked world.”

But to return again to the fault of engrossing conversation. I once witnessed a contest for the parole between two indefatigable talkers. One of them, who despaired of a legitimate opening in the conversation, began talking himself; the other, unwilling to resign his advantage, continued talking also, whilst the party around them were smiling and conjecturing which of the two would gain the ascendancy. The prize was won by the most powerful lungs, and by an artifice in taking his breath during his long sesquipedalian words.

At another time, I witnessed one of these haranguers so eager to take a lead in conversation, that, not contented with the subject in discussion to his own circle of a large party, he bawled across and athwart the table to contribute to other little knots of conversation, mixing up most ludicrously, almost at a breath, physics, metaphysics, and political economy.

In conversation it is the duty of a good host to provide topics suitable to each guest, and to sustain the concert, without himself playing, or permitting others to play too long solos.

Swift's lines on the analogous rules of carving and conversation are very humorous.

Scholars, when good sense describing,
Call it tasting and imbibing ;
Metaphoric meat and drink,
Is to understand, and think.
We may carve for others thus,
And let others carve for us ;
To discourse and to attend,
Is to help yourself and friend.
Conversation is but carving—
Carve for all yourself is starving :
Give no more to every guest
Than he is able to digest ;
Give him always of the prime,
And but little at a time ;
Carve for all but just enough,—
Let them neither starve nor stuff ;
And, that you may have your due,
Let your neighbours carve for you.

My third canon is,—

THAT REPETITION OF STORIES AND REMARKS
IN THE SAME WORDS SHOULD BE AS MUCH
AS POSSIBLE AVOIDED.

WITH some persons conversation is nothing but a string of stories. Now, though nothing enlivens conversation more than apt anecdotes, a continual succession of them is cloying ; and the misfortune is, that anecdote-mongers are but too apt to repeat

the same on every occasion. It is a curious matter of observation, how very seldom people change their illustrative stories, so that amongst those who live very much with one another, the same story is expected on the same occasion, as much as the known songs of a gentleman singer.

So treacherous is the memory of some story-tellers that they have been known to tell the same story, in the same words, to the same person,—even to him who had before imparted it in the course of the same evening.

The connoisseur calls old story-tellers the cuckoos of conversation. Some watch for an opportunity to introduce a favourite story ; some bring it in without any regard to the subject on the tapis. Others are so economical of their stories as to whisper them first to their neighbours, till they have excited a fit of laughter, in which the rest of the company wish to partake. Certainly—

A story in which native humour reigns,
Is often useful, always entertains :
A graver fact enlisted on your side
May furnish illustration well applied ;
But sedentary weavers of long tales
Give me the fidgets, and my patience fails ;

'Tis the most asinine employ on earth,
To hear them tell of parentage and birth,
And echo conversation dull and dry,
Embellished with—He said,—and, So said I !
At every interview, their route the same,
The repetition makes attention lame ;
We bustle up with unsuccessful speed,
And in the saddest part cry, ‘Droll indeed !’

Many wits have been known to prime themselves with stories for the party they were going to join.

A gentleman called on Wilkes, and not finding him at home, sat down to wait his return, and, to amuse himself in the interim, took up a French book of anecdotes, many of which he observed were marked. Mr. Wilkes did not come back, as was expected, and the gentleman went away. He met Wilkes, however, with some common friends at dinner, and, to his great amusement, heard all the anecdotes, which he observed marked in the book, most ingeniously introduced in the course of the evening.

Ars artium est celare artem. This rule is particularly applicable to our subject. Swift says of Stella—

Her hearers are amazed from whence
Proceeds that fund of wit and sense,

Which, though her modesty would shroud,
Breaks like the sun from behind a cloud ;
Whilst gracefulness its art conceals,
And yet through every motion steals.

A premeditated and laborious display of learning, and even of wit, thrust in artificially on the company, disgusts. I once knew a gentleman who was condemned to drink a tumbler of salt and water, on being found guilty of dissemboguing, on a party of young members of a college, the contents of several pages of a Dictionary which he had conned in the morning.

A repetition of the same remarks is still more absurd than the repetition of stories ; for remarks are supposed to arise *ex re natâ*, from the occasion, but, as

To observations which ourselves we make,
We grow more partial for the observer's sake,

it is not uncommon to meet some worthy persons who have an attachment to some particular reflections, couched in particular phraseology, which you never fail to hear when the subject is started to which they are continually applied.

My next law is—

THAT QUOTATIONS SHOULD NOT BE INDULGED
IN TOO MUCH, AND NEVER IN A LANGUAGE
UNKNOWN OR ILL UNDERSTOOD BY THE MA-
JORITY OF THE COMPANY.

MEN of dull imaginations are often, as a compensation, blest with strong memories. These are the great quoters in society. Such persons may be called the haberdashers of talk, who deal in ready-made articles of conversation; they have citations at their fingers' ends for every occasion, and in as many languages as they can command. Such persons are flagrantly guilty of the fault of repetitions.

When a lady was complaining to Madame de Maintenon that unfortunately her daughter had a very bad memory, Madame de M. exclaimed, "*Grace à Dieu elle ne citera pas donc.*" She had probably suffered under the tortures of some inexorable quoter.

I once had at my table two gentlemen of equally tenacious memories, which retained everything they read, verse or prose, sense or nonsense. When one of them had quoted till we were fatigued, his brother would take up the strain, and if we had not

cried out for mercy, would have sealed the mouths of the rest of the company for the whole evening.

“Porson,” says Reynolds, “was at a party where I was present, and before the cloth was removed, our host happening to assert that the ancients never drank spirits, to prove the contrary, the Professor repeated, *sans cérémonie*, above two hundred Greek lines, which hardly any one in the company understood but himself. Another person at the table, afterwards carelessly and accidentally quoted from the fourth act of the *Belle’s Stratagem*, and Porson asserted he was wrong. Argument, that pest of society, ensued; the result was, that, in order to prove that his antagonist had misquoted, Porson commenced the fourth act, and was proceeding through the whole of it, *verbatim* and *seriatim*, when his opponent wisely and adroitly, to the relief of the whole room, gave in, and I conclude from that day bowed down to Porson’s superior memory.” Porson, considered with regard to his learning and memory, was an extraordinary man; and, no doubt, to make such long quotations accurately was extremely difficult. Many would have said, with Johnson, “Would it were impossible!”

The pedantry of quoting in a language unknown to the majority of the company was very wittily rebuked by a facetious lady, who once exhorted a scholar, for the benefit of the females present to reform his practice; to quote in English, and to swear in Greek.

The fifth rule I have laid down is,—

THAT ONE'S OWN DEAR SELF, AND ONE'S OWN
PROPERTY, AND CONNEXIONS, AND MALA-
DIES, SHOULD BE SPARINGLY INTRODUCED
IN CONVERSATION.

As vanity is a grand ruling passion with a majority of the world, one is not surprised that this rule should be so little observed. Many think no topic worth talking about, but themselves and their own affairs, and relations. “*On ne lasse jamais quand on parle de soi-même,*” says Rochefoucault,—we are never tired when we talk of ourselves; but, if *we* are not, it is certain that our auditors are, and probably there are few greater bores in society than the selfish praters, whose geese, to use a vulgar proverb, are all swans,—whose horses, according to their own accounts, are the best,—whose wines are the choicest,—whose

children are the cleverest in the world ! Woe betide you, if one of these praters, in whose company you are, has a noble relative, by descent or connexion, to be proud of. You must then submit to all the tediousness of genealogical detail, and listen to the virtues of those in whose character you are not in the least interested, and whose only merit, probably, is in their patent of nobility.

Dr. Johnson, wishing to ridicule this folly, pointed out an earlier account of a Scotch laird's family than any he had mentioned. You will see it in the sixth chapter of Genesis : " And there were Grants in those days." The Doctor had previously taken the liberty of changing an *i* into an *r*, turning Giants into Grants.

Long dissertations on the talker's own property are still more disgusting, as they exhibit inordinate vanity, with a desire of exciting envy. If we could wonder at anything in so inconsistent a being as man, one would think it strange that human beings should be often more vain of those things in which they have no merit, than in those which have been accomplished by their own talents and industry. Thus men are frequently more puffed up by inherited, than by acquired, property and honours.

*Sed quid avi, aut proavi, aut quid non fecimus ipsi,
Vix ea nostra voco.*

I remember a country clergyman who was looked up to with great awe at the quarter-sessions, in a remote county, coming, after many years' absence, to an Oxford common-room, where he was shocked to meet with the same familiarity of manners that he had experienced when a fellow of a college. His facts were disputed, and his reasonings contradicted, till, being no longer able to control himself, he rose from his seat to leave the company, exclaiming, "And is this fitting treatment to a doctor in divinity, a county-magistrate, and a gentleman with a landed estate of not less than fifteen hundred a year?"

Some men employ their health, an ugly trick,
In making known how oft they have been sick ;
And give us, in recitals of disease,
A doctor's trouble, but without his fees :
Relate how many weeks they kept their bed,—
How an emetic or cathartic sped ;
Nothing is slightly touched, much less forgot,—
Nose, ears, and eyes, seem present on the spot.
Now the distemper, spite of draught or pill,
Victorious seemed, and now the doctor's skill ;
And now,—alas, for unforeseen mishaps,—
They put on a damp night-cap and relapse ;

They thought they must have died, they were so bad ;
Their peevish hearers almost wish they had !

Sixthly,—

CONVERSATION SHOULD NOT BE TOO PROFES-
SIONAL OR CONTROVERSIAL.

I FEAR it may be thought that in thus diminishing the subjects of conversation, I shall appear to be playing the part of the two wives, one of whom plucked out all the gray hairs from the husband's head, and the other all the black ; and thus left the poor man bald. But I mean only to prescribe a temperate use of topics which, carried to excess, become tedious. Thus, though professional subjects, which must frequently occur in conversation, furnish some of the most instructive, interesting, and enlivening communications of knowledge and reflection, all are aware how tiresome they become, when carried to great length, and are discussed in technical language. *Abeunt studio in mores.* Our studies affect our manners and conversation unavoidably, but we should take care that they do not smell too strongly of the lamp.

Lawyers are habitually disputative. They often require more evidence than can at once be given for

every fact asserted, and will see things only in their own way. This is something like the conveyancer, who threw down the novel of *Tom Jones* because he found a flaw in Allworthy's will, and rejected an epic poem because it proved nothing.

Philosophers converse with difficulty, and Dugald Stewart, in his *Elements of Philosophy*, has explained the reason of this with perspicuous ingenuity.

Medical men are apt to talk too much of diseases and patients, in general company; and clergymen, if they do not talk of religion, frequently make remarks too solemn for the occasion.

Some persons make all conversation a controversy. Dr. Johnson, Parr, and others, are renowned for their gladiatorial conflicts of talk, and no one ever succeeded better in this style than Dr. Johnson. He had learning, knowledge, wit, judgment, a copious weight of words, a powerful voice, an athletic figure, an astonishing felicity of illustration; so that he could always advance something plausible, if not just; and, as it was wittily said, if his pistol missed fire, he knocked you down with the but end of it. Goldsmith accused him of

making Conversation a monarchy which should be a republic.

Though the gladiatorial style was certainly the characteristic of Johnson's conversation, he approved of a different style, for he said "That is the happiest conversation where there is no competition, no vanity; but a calm, quiet interchange of sentiments."

Every one must have found that the most profitable and agreeable conversation has been with one or two sensible and pleasant companions; for, as it has been justly observed, "Owing to the vanity of talent and the steady determination of each to eclipse his competitor, those very men, who individually, or even in duets, are extremely pleasant,—collectively, like other corporate bodies, become frequently troublesome and unprofitable."

A facetious essayist assigns a proper place to the intellectual gladiator, among the pugnacious sons of the fancy, who delight to behold blows neatly laid in, ribs and jaw-bone elegantly broken, and eyes sealed up with delicacy and address.

Blockheads and wits be this your rule—

Abstain from sharp replies ;

Silence is wisdom in a fool,

And mercy in the wise.

Cowper's reflections on this fault are very happily expressed.

Ye powers who rule the tongue, if such there are,
And make colloquial happiness your care,
Preserve me from the thing I dread and hate,
A duel, in the form of a debate !
The clash of arguments and jar of words,
Worse than the mortal brunt of human swords,
Decide no question with their tedious length,
(For opposition gives opinion strength ;)
Divert the champions prodigal of breath,
And put the peaceably disposed to death.

Parr's conversation seems to have been an imitation of Johnson's, with all his rudeness, more than all his pedantry, but not with equal felicity of familiar illustration, or such various knowledge of men and things ; or, I may add, such discriminating good sense. Parr had, probably, more knowledge of Greek, and even of Latin, books, and a more critical discernment of the niceties of both those languages than Johnson, and was occasionally very eloquent and severely caustic in his satire.

As conversation is a game of which all the players ought to know something, the simplest and most comprehensible even to the lowest in company,

is frequently chosen. Thus scholars are little able to avail themselves of their classical knowledge; for common ears shudder at the sounds of Plato and Aristotle, of Tigranes and Tiridates.

Of Burke's conversation I have already spoken*. Sheridan's has been ably anatomized by Mr. Thomas Moore. His flashes seem to have been very irregular, and the volcano for a long time quiescent. He made his fire-works at odd times, and let them off when he found a good occasion. Lord Chesterfield, Lord North, Topham, Beauclerc, Hare, Naylor, and others, have been celebrated for their polished ease of conversation, intermixed with *bon mots* that have been retailed in all companies.

I have heard that a nobleman of a very retentive memory, who is famous for assembling all the men of talent at his table, took the trouble one night, after his guests were departed, of Boswellizing the conversation that had past, and found that Grattan's was the only part of it that would bear reciting.

* Johnson said of him—"Burke, sir, is such a man, that if you met him for the first time in a street where you were stopped by a drove of oxen, and you and he stepped aside to take shelter but for five minutes, he would *talk* in such a manner that you would say, This is an extraordinary man!"

Cicero was so famous for his *bon mots*, that Cæsar employed a man like Baron Grimm, to send him a collection of them from time to time, to any place where he was encamped.

CONVERSATION SHOULD NOT BE A MERE INTERCHANGE OF RECIPROCAL SCANDAL.

Scandal, or ridiculous and calumnious anecdotes of neighbours, have always supplied the largest stock of fuel for conversation in small towns and watering-places, where few public events occur to excite attention. It is said to be so natural a guest at a card-table, as to seem to have some necessary connexion with cards. It is founded partly in that original sin of selfishness, which delights to lower a neighbour, from a pride of being exempt from the failings exposed to censure; and partly from want of imagination and knowledge to bring forward any equally interesting topic. It is the talk of the idlest and most ill-stored minds and most unfeeling hearts,—regardless of the injury they may do by the propagation of malignant reports if they can but excite attention and raise a laugh*.

* “I never speak of a man’s virtues before his face,” said Bishop Beveridge, “or of his vices behind his back.”

Under the head of scandal, I do not mean to deprecate all discussion on human characters, for we well know

The proper study of mankind is man ;
but to condemn that flagrant vice of bartering calumnious stories, which is unfortunately but too prevalent in society.

CONVERSATION SHOULD BE CARRIED ON WITH
MUTUAL COURTESY, AVOIDING CLAMOROUS
TONES AND VIOLENT GESTICULATION.

“ In this kind of commerce with our equals and inferiors,” says St. Evremont, “ we should use an easiness of address, a ready and respectful attention to whatever they utter, and avoid an arrogant superiority in conversation, either from talents or acquirements.” A due attention to this caution will defend us from the hate and envy of those with whom we associate.

Those among whom we use expressions of inattention and contempt, or pronounce sentiments with too much warmth and prejudice, will either avoid us, or seek occasion to injure us by secret acts of malevolence, excited thereto by painful feelings of inferiority. Such is the nature of

man! In the *Idler* conversation is compared to a bowl of punch, in the composition of which, while the spirit is duly tempered by water, and the acid is sufficiently corrected by sugar, the ingredients wonderfully conspire to form the most delicious beverage known amongst mortals.

Violent unrestrained talkers spoil conversation, however brilliant their talents may be, or however extensive their information; they extinguish meaner lights, as the pleasant and useful fire is often put out on a cold frosty day, by the intromission of the sun's beams at the window. As good-humour and playfulness are great helps in conversation, it may be compared to a game of battledore and shuttlecock. The two players should accommodate their efforts to each other, and let their blows be neither too weak nor too strong for the space between them; neither must strike too high or too low, and the game will be well played and long kept up. Should some boisterous man advance with a racket, and exhibit his corporeal force and violent activity, the amicable and quiet battledore-man must soon quit the field. Dr. Johnson struck too often with a racket, and his playfellow, poor Boswell, often found, and often complained, that the attempts at a

battledore-conversation were overpowered by the gigantic arm and horse-play raillery of his tremendous companion.

Boileau, though in his satirical writings he showed little tenderness towards men of inferior abilities, yet boasted that his conversation was without claws and talons, and that, in pure good-humour he could at will sheath these mighty instruments of annoyance, and quench in smiles “the lightning of his eye—the thunder of his beak.”

M. Fontenelle, the most popular writer of his time, on a variety of subjects, was once asked by a friend how it happened that, with his transcendent powers of talk, he yet retained so many friends, as well as admirers. “Sir,” said he, “I always suppose that my amicable opponent has some meaning in what he advances, and so my answer is delivered with mildness and candour.”

Lord Orrery says that Swift made it a rule never to talk more than five minutes at a time, and then to permit some other person to take up the ball; which, if they failed to do, he thought himself at liberty to proceed. It is recorded of Socrates, and even of the mild Addison, that they had a cruel trick of drawing weak people into absurdities,

and thus exposing them to the ridicule of the company.

Conversation is never so well, and in every other respect so agreeably conducted, as when the company consists of women as well as men; quizzing and banter, therefore,—too prevalent amongst school-boys and young men raw from college—should be wholly avoided; it would indeed be very grating to the latter, should females, in their turn, be allowed to employ so dangerous a weapon as banter, added to their already sufficient powers of amusing by gentle converse, and exhilarating by their magic smiles. Whoever has heard the rustic tones of many persons in conversation must acknowledge the influence of females over the boisterous voices of unpolished talkers. Some persons seem never to have learned the gamut of conversation, and may be properly called ranters or roarers, and abuse the faculties of the human tongue to the annoyance of all the company. Pope, our great moralist, was blessed with a melodious voice, and his friend, Mr. Southern, the comic writer, used to style him affectionately, his little nightingale.

Cowper the poet, who was all nerves, describes loud talkers with great force of sarcastic humour.

Vociferating roarers kill me quite,
A noisy man is always in the right.
I twirl my thumbs, fall back into my chair,
Fix on the wainscot a distressful stare ;
And when I hope his blunders are all out,
Reply discreetly—To be sure!—No doubt!

Some persons, from an excess of animal spirits, seem to be in a state of perpetual ebullition of mind ; they are all motion, mimicry, and gesticulation, and seem to talk from head to foot. Dr. Johnson had a strong aversion to this pantomimic substitute for conversation, and when he saw a person thus acting the part of a monkey would rise from his chair and pinion his arms.

Underbearers in conversation are, undoubtedly, much less irksome than overbearers, yet too much hesitation and timidity render a man unfit for colloquial purposes; and we cannot but smile at Cowper's delineation of this very cautious gentleman.

Dubious is such a scrupulous good man,
Yes, you may catch him tripping, if you can ;

He would not with a peremptory tone
Assert the nose upon his face his own ;
With hesitation admirably slow,
He humbly hopes,—presumes it may be so !

Addison, who had lent Sir Richard Steele a hundred pounds, was tired of his friend's continual assent to all his assertions, and cried out in a comic style of indignation—‘ Sir Richard, either contradict me, or pay me my hundred pounds !’

The Proser is of some kin to the Underbearer, as he deals more in words than ideas ; and if he gives an opinion, or narrates a fact, the patience of the hearers is equally taxed. It happens well for the company, if a more lively man can, with pregnant brevity, discount this tedious man's long-drawn histories and dissertations.

Conversation not only differs in different countries, but in the same at different times.

In France, where the ladies are seldom separated from the gentlemen in society, the tone of conversation partakes more of gallantry than ours : there is a more continual effort to shine and please by a continual pique and repique of wit. War, the theatre, the ladies, and the court, are the predominating subjects. In Germany, transcendental phi-

losophy, music, and mysterious stories. In England, politics, and the state of the country. That the language and style of conversation have considerably changed in this country, must be familiar to many persons who have much passed the middle age of life.

The coarse, obscene conversation, which was so common in the court even of the grave Charles the First, and still worse in that of his reprobate son, and which lasted to within fifty years of the present time, has now fortunately passed away with the gross habits of intoxication, from which it chiefly arose. The extreme violence of party politics has also in a great measure ceased, and if conversation be not so animated and humorous as it was formerly, it is certainly more decent and rational. Swift's *Essay on Polite Conversation*, appears to have been no extravagant caricature of the colloquial style of the polished circles in his days. It is certainly one of the wittiest and most amusing of his short pieces. Many of the jokes of Tom Neverout, and Miss Sprightly, would now pass off with great *éclat*, though all play on words is, at present, considered as rather *mauvais ton* in the best society.

The tone of conversation in every country, is certainly much governed by the characters of the females: now, as the minds and manners of ladies have been much improved of late days, conversation has been proportionally elevated. It is not thought polite, at present, to prate to them about the fashions, or necessary to treat them with unmeaning gabble. Not only novels, and poetry, and the arts of music and painting, but history, and some of the sciences, are found to be within the bounds of their comprehension and the limits of their knowledge: and as the jealousy of their intellectual attainments has worn away, we are become much more rational companions than formerly.

Femmes précieuses,—Pedantic ladies, as well as gentlemen, may be found now as well as in the days of Molière: ladies who will talk about the *isms*, and the *ologies*; who will look sanctimonious, and preach injudiciously about religious mysteries, at wrong times and places, and to wrong persons. This, however, is a kind of abuse, to which all good things are liable, and I think we may fairly assert, that at no time in this country, was conversation more decorous, more instructive, more temperate,

more agreeable to a rational mind, than at present. With its intellectual improvement it may have lost a little of its animation, but on the whole, no sensible person can doubt that society has gained by the change.

This improvement in conversation has not been confined to the upper circles, but has extended to the lowest. Much more good talk is now to be heard amongst our middling classes, and in refined language, than many of the highest could display sixty years ago. I have been quite astonished at the dialogues in and on stage-coaches of late days; on topics, and in words, which I should have thought quite beyond the reach and the knowledge of the parties conversing. This is to be accounted for by the very extensive scale of education at the present period, by the diffusion of cheap tracts, and particularly of newspapers—and the more general social intercourse of all mankind, by the improvements of roads and public conveyances.

There are certain epochs of conversation traceable in the different stages of society. In the most barbarous times, war, the chase, and supernatural appearances, are the usual characteristics of it. In a more advanced stage—fables of love-adventures,

and the ruder kind of poetry; and to supply the defects of talk, bards are called in to recite their verses, and fools to supply jests, and furnish a subject for them. In a still further advanced stage, during the struggles of despotism and liberty, politics form a ruling topic.

In the most refined state, when the government is settled, and when industry and opulence have generated luxurious habits, and an improved cultivation of mind, the arts, theatres, new romances, and poetry—and finally, the sciences, philosophy, and religious truths, are found to be the reigning subjects of conversation.

Proverbs, puns, rebuses, charades, so common fifty years ago, are now expelled from polite society.

I SHALL conclude this essay, (in which I fear I shall be found guilty of violating three of the most striking of my own rules, talking too long, and citing too much, and telling old stories,) with the portrait of a good converser.

“If any man ever possessed the faculty of making society tasteful and happy, it was Mr. Desenfans. He was too well bred to be the hero

of his own table, and the charm he possessed, was the absence of self-display, exchanged for the address to draw forth the talents of others. He could continue any subject with great wit and information just as long as he pleased, and change it without any apparent check or abruptness. In the midst of great bodily sufferings he excelled all others in hilarity, and the goodness of his nature impressed his countenance with uniform benevolence."

QUACKERY.

SYNOPSIS.

DEFINITION—PROFESSIONAL AND LITERARY QUACKS—

PUFFS OF LITERARY MEN—CHARLATANERIA

ERUDITORUM.

QUACKERY.

QUACKERY may, in general terms, be defined as an arrogant assumption of some mysterious knowledge which is not really possessed. Words govern the generality of the world, who seldom go so deep as to look into things; and impostors well know how likely their cause is to succeed, if their terms are but once admitted.

Much of religious superstition, or fanaticism, might be classed under this definition; but this is too solemn and painful a subject for discussion, and is one, moreover, that has been very properly forbidden by the regulations of most societies of this description.

The word *Quack* is derived from the same word in Dutch, signifying *frivolous*. It has been always understood to apply more particularly to impostors in the medical profession. But before I go further, let me quote this remark of Dr. Venner.—

“What I have said concerning the ill carriage of some physicians, doth nothing concern the worthy professors of that noble faculty, nor anything derogate from the respects and rewards they so well deserve, and which are due to them; but only against those who disgrace the faculty, and make their patients’ purse their sole object, and who, by fraudulent ways, cheat and delude them, which true, worthy, conscientious physicians abhor and detest.”—Dr. Venner’s *Via Recta ad Vitam Longam*.

To return. The word *quack* has always been understood to apply to a man who, as Nicholson says, “for the good of the public, and by the blessing of Heaven, undertakes by his pills, powders, balsams, or potions, to cure all disorders. Thus,” he continues, “ignorance and blasphemy unite in picking the pockets and ruining the constitutions of thousands of credulous people. The pretension to any one medicine as a certain cure for any one disorder, is next to absurd: much more ridiculous is it then, to suppose that any one medicine will remove all kinds of complaints. Every medicine possesses active properties, or it does not; if it be active, it must be dangerous to apply it indiscriminately to persons of every age, without regard

to their habit of living. An active medicine which might be very useful in strengthening a debilitated constitution, would be highly injurious if exhibited in an acute rheumatism, or other inflammatory disorder, and *vice versâ*. Consequently, the application of the same remedy in all cases can hardly fail of being fatal to some. Should the medicine be inactive, which happily is often the case, it can be of no other utility than to work upon the patient's imagination, and amuse him whilst his pocket is picked."

This is a neat and concise characteristic and condemnation of quackery, which has flourished in all ages and nations, in the most barbarous and the most refined.

Amongst the rudest people, as diseases are supposed to be inflicted by the malignity of the evil principle, we see the prevalent use of charms, incantations, amulets*, the fetishes, sacrifices, lus-

* The favourite plan of curing diseases in Turkey, by Dr. Madden's account, is that of amulets; which he says, "I have found on broken bones, on aching heads, and sometimes on love-sick hearts. The latter are worn by young ladies, and consist of a leaf or two of hyacinth. They sometimes are composed of unmeaning words, like the *Abracadabra* of the ancient Greeks, for curing fevers, and the *Abracalans* of the Jews, for other disorders. At other times the amulets con-

trations, to appease the wrath of malignant spirits, or frighten them out of the diseased patient *.

The more polished polytheists, who could gain no relief from their supplications to Apollo and Esculapius, sacrificed to the *Dii inferiores*, in hopes of

sist simply of a scroll with the words *Bismillah*, ‘in the name of the most merciful God;’ with some cabalistical signs of the Turkish astrologer, Geffer; but most commonly they contain a verse of the *Koran*.

“I think the most esteemed in dangerous diseases are shreds of the clothing of the pilgrim-camel, which conveys the sultan’s annual present to the sacred city. These are often more sought after than the physician, and frequently do more good, because more faith is put in them.

“It were well if no more preposterous and disgusting remedies were employed; but I have taken off from a gun-shot wound, a roasted mouse, which I was gravely informed was intended to extract the ball.”

* John of Gaddesden, the physician to Edward the Second, 1320, our earliest English medical author, had a great taste for an *amulet*, and an anodyne necklace. He, in his *Rosa Anglica*, gives this admirable recipe for the small-pox. “Immediately after the eruption, cause the whole body of your patient to be wrapped in scarlet cloth, or in any other red cloth, and command everything about the bed to be made red: this is an excellent cure. It was in this manner I treated the son of the noble king of England, when he had the small-pox, and I cured him without leaving any marks.”

Wraxall, in his *Memoirs*, also mentions that the Emperor Francis the First, when infected with the small-pox, was rolled up in scarlet cloth by order of his physician, so late as 1765, when he died.

succour. Even Paracelsus, in the sixteenth century, thought the devil should, in prudence, be invoked to cure a desperate malady.

Witchcraft may be considered as a species of quackery, though more allied to superstition. Witches professed to have intercourse with supernatural agents, and to cure as well as to inflict diseases; though they were supposed to be more addicted to the latter than the former practice, from their alliance with the devil, to whom they gave themselves up, body and soul, and for which he covenanted to supply all their wants, to avenge them on all their enemies, and send them an imp to obey their orders whenever he was summoned. This superstition was believed from the earliest times till the latter end of the seventeenth century, and all who wrote to disprove the powers of witches were deemed atheists. It is well known how frequently they were tried by various absurd tests, and generally found guilty, and most barbarously tortured and burned*.

* *Vide* Lord Northampton's treatise, *a Preservative against the Poison of supposed Prophecies*, and King James's *Demonologia*, and Sir John Glanville on *Witches*, for ample information on this subject. The first sectarian settlers in North

When little science, as to the cause or nature of diseases, or the drugs which could give relief, was possessed by any, recourse was had to the shrines and relics, and holy wells, of whose instantaneous efficacy and perfect cures there are innumerable instances recorded, at the places where they were said to be effected, and handed down to posterity in various printed attestations.

The pious practice of medicine has had its professors and patients, even in these days; and few empirics have been more successful in the number of their applicants than Prince Hohenlohe and Mrs. Hughes, who professed to cure by prayer only. The lady attracted such crowds at Worcester as to be highly beneficial to the turnpike-gates at the entrance to the town. I remember seeing her at Oxford, and was not a little surprised to find some of the better educated order of people applying to her for relief.

When the cure of diseases has passed from the hands of priests to those of physicians, the nature of complaints, and the efficacy of particular drugs,

America accused and executed many persons for witchcraft, until prohibited by the English government. See *Cotton Mather's History of New England*.

have attracted attention. To the mysterious secrecy with which these have been compounded, and the boasted efficacy which has been attributed to them, we owe the race of quacks.

Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona multi, and many quacks before Paracelsus; but as they all bear some strong traits of similitude, it would be tedious to trace the pedigree of this family before this most illustrious of its professors.

Paracelsus was a gentleman of many names,—Aurelius Philippus Theophrastus Bombast de Hohenheim. One of his names, Bombast, is certainly very characteristic of his language, and may have given rise to the term. He was professor of medicine at Basle, and a man of considerable erudition, but of inordinate vanity; he publicly burnt the works of Galen and Avicenna, and proclaimed his utter contempt of all his medical brethren. His knowledge of chemistry and pharmacy led him to discover the virtues of opium and mercury, which other physicians of that day rejected as cold *in the fourth degree*. He obtained great success and reputation from the use of these drugs, and boasted that he had discovered the *elixir vitæ*, which would prolong human life to the age of

Methuselah. He could not determine how long he would himself be contented to live, but death decided he should end his days before he was forty-eight years old, in 1541. By the way, Charles the Second strove to repair his exhausted constitution by the *Golden Drop*, and is said to have rewarded a quack with five hundred pounds for the recipe.

By way of mystifying the world as to the nature of his art, Paracelsus says that men ought to study the analogy between the great and the little world. In man, for instance, he discovers the motions of the stars, of the water, the air, all vegetables and minerals, all constellations, and the four winds. He asserts that a physician ought readily to know what in man corresponds to the *Cauda Draconis*, to *Aries*, and the *Polar Star*, to the rising and setting of the sun, and if he be ignorant of these things he is good for nothing. He affirmed that the human body consists of mercury, sulphur, and salt; from the first, proceeded all faintness and tremblings; from the second, all inflammatory complaints,—from the third gout and cholic. All these might be cured by his quintessence of gold, *elixir vitæ*; or, what were still more efficacious, by

certain cabalistic words and magical incantations, only known to himself.

Van Helmont followed Paracelsus, and was not less famed for his chemical knowledge, and the boasted success of his cures—indeed so far were they thought to surpass human art, that he was persecuted by the Inquisition as a sorcerer; and was constrained after his release to fly into Holland. He adopted much of the mystical language of his great idol, Paracelsus, and like him was a great enemy to Galen and his disciples: considering the works of Galen as a great congeries of reasonings and disputations, but those of Hippocrates as a collection of facts on which he reasons but little.

These views of medical practice have, in truth, divided the opinions of the world at all times; some persons ranging themselves under the banners of the dogmatists, and others under those of the empirics.

The dogmatists did not deny the necessity of observation in medical practice, but asserted that such observations could not be judiciously or accurately made without the help of reason.

The empirics asked the dogmatists whether

reason taught the same things as experience did, or the contrary,—if, said they, it teaches the same things, the reasoning is superfluous; if anything contrary to experience, it is prejudicial. They condemned anatomical dissections, especially on living bodies, (which is said to have been sometimes practised by Herophilus, Erasistratus, and others) saying that enough was known from experience to guide our practice. The Empirics thought all conjectures drawn from occult causes were of no importance; since the business of a physician was not to discover what caused the disease, but what cured it.

This has been always the favourite doctrine of those who have paid more attention to the operation of drugs, than the structure and disorders of the human body.

Fancy has run riot on the strangest analogies between various parts of our frame and the forms and habits of plants; which gave rise to all the quackery of *signatures*. In a curious old work, intituled *Materotechnia Medicinæ*, 1651, by Noah Biggs, who calls himself *Chimiatrophilos*, it is said,—“There have not likewise been wanting, who have comprised the immense catalogue of dis-

eases in the *Signes* of the Zodiac, as Bartholomæus Caricterus, who divided all the powers of herbs into thirty-six. There are some who square the powers, virtues, aspects, and applications of the horizon of herbs to diseases, from certain positions of the heaven, emitting some virtue which moveth every thing in the kind which is diverse from the circular motion itself. And so they have denominated some herbs lunar, and some solar; and such-like toys put into great words, as that mechanic experimentater hath it in his *Sylva Sylvarum*,” &c.

Physicians were formerly subject to examination at the college, concerning their knowledge of the stars,—for it is said *Medicus sine peritia cæli nihil est*.

“The properties,” Mr. Noah Bigg affirms, “are in the seeds of the plants, and not in the heaven, or stars. Those powers of the stars which have been fictitiously imposed on heats and colds and complexions, are now grown out of date. It is a sophism to attribute effects to causes which possess in them no causality at all.”

He (Noah Bigg) is also bold enough to ridicule the nonsense which was talked about the degrees of heat and cold in plants. “Certainly it is also a

shameful thing to fetch the temperature of simples from heat, and not from the fountains of the seed :” not a very intelligible correction of the error.

It is amusing to read in the old herbalists, Gerard, Johnson and others—the exact statement of the temperament, and the various (and sometimes contradictory) virtues of plants.

One of the peculiarities of medical superstition is to attribute every ordinary and natural effect to extraordinary and unnatural causes; thus we find in the time of superstitious delusion, that even the salutary effects of well-known herbs, were attributed to the influence of the planet under whose ascendancy they were collected, rather than any intrinsic property in the herb itself. Every one is acquainted with the solemnity of the ceremonies resorted to by the Druids of our own isle, who were both priests and physicians, in gathering plants for medical purposes. Black hellebore was not to be cut, but plucked with the right hand, covered with a portion of the robe, then conveyed secretly to the left hand. Vervain, a plant much used in magical operations, was to be gathered at the rising of the Dog-star; when neither sun nor moon shone, an expiatory sacrifice of fruit and

honey having been previously offered to the earth. When thus prepared, it rendered a person invulnerable, vanquished fevers, was a charm to conciliate friendship, and an antidote to poison. The same mummary was employed in gathering mistletoe, which was cut with a golden knife, only when the moon was six days old—which was esteemed of such value that it was believed the Gods expressly sent it down for the benefit of mankind. When thus mystically gathered, it was like Solomon's Balm of Gilead, or Dutchman's Butter, good for everything. Hence, says M. De Grands Prez, (who swears that Pæony, gathered when the moon is descendent in the sign of Aries, cures the falling sickness,) hence it is apparent of what consequence astrology is in the practice of physic.

The superstitious quackery in the mode of gathering medicinal plants is not a little curious, as may be well exemplified in old Gerard's description of the Pæony, a plant of wonderful salutary virtues. He says that Ælianus declareth that it is not to be plucked without danger, for he that first plucked it, not knowing the danger of it, perished. Therefore, a string must be fastened to it in the night, and a hungry dog tied thereto, who, being

allured by the smell of roasted flesh set before him, may pluck it up by the roots. Pliny, Theophrastus and others, all agree that it must be gathered in the night, for if any man shall pluck off the root in the day-time, being seen of the woodpecker, he is in danger to lose his eyes. Old Gerard, however, says—"all these things be vain and frivolous. It is no marvel that such kind of trifles, and most wicked and superstitious ceremonies, are found in those books of the most antient writers, for there were many things in their time very vainly feigned, and cogged in for ostentation sake, as by the Egyptians and other counterfeit mates, as Pliny doth truly testify. An imitator of whom, in times past, was one Andreas, a physician, who, as Galen sayeth, conveyed into the art of physick, lies and subtile delusions. For which reason, Galen bade his scholars to refrain from the reading of him, and all such-like lying and deceitful sycophants."

In the vegetable quackery, the number of different herbs combined in one recipe is very amusing to consider. Thus, in *oil of swallows*, balm, knot-grass, rib-wort, and twenty other herbs were compounded with twenty *live* swallows, to be well beaten together in a mortar, as a sovereign remedy

for various diseases. I remember to have breakfasted with a gentleman who had been ridiculing quackery, but who, like the tellers of ghost-stories, had *one* fact that *could not* be contradicted. *His* was, that tea compounded of thirteen different kinds of herbs would cure the thirteen different disorders with which he was afflicted; each herb having a special commission to bestow its juices on the part affected.

The *vegetable* quacks have set their faces against the *mineral* quacks; we have, therefore, many assurances in advertisements, recommending particular medicines, because nothing but vegetable substances are used in the infallible nostrum.

Some learned doctors have thought, that all sanatory virtue was to be found in *animal* substances. Sir Theodore Mayerne in his powder for the gout, had amongst other things raspings of a human skull *unburied*: and for hypochondriasis, an ointment made from adders, bats, sucking-whelps, earth-worms, hogs'-grease, marrow of a stag, and the thigh-bone of an ox. The liver of frogs, the blood of weasels, and many other ingredients, worthy of the witches' cauldron, were specifics with this great doctor. Though these potent panaceas were

excluded afterwards from the *Materia-Medica*, there were to be found supposed remedies, which had as problematical a title;—balsam of bats, and the lungs of an executed criminal; live vipers, the blood of a dragon, and *lac virginale*, were also highly approved drugs in the days of ignorance. Live spiders and frogs are still in use as remedies for agues and consumptions.

Were we to make a classification of medicinal quacks, I think we might arrange them thus; first, Astrological; second, Vegetable; third, Animal; fourth, Mineral; fifth, Magnetical; sixth, Chemical; seventh and eighth, Rubbing and Touching; ninth, Cosmetic; tenth, Capillary; eleventh, Tonsorial; and twelfth, Blacking; (if we may take them all under this general head.)

I have made some mention of the astrological, vegetable, and animal; and shall now proceed to the others.

As it was found out that in spite of hard words and arrogant pretensions, many diseases baffled the skill of the scientific, and defied the potency of vegetable drugs, the mineral kingdom was ransacked for new remedies. The more active drugs that were supplied from this source, being, for a long

time, little known or understood by the humbler medical practitioners, became a rich source of wealth to the quacks,—and the most destructive poisons, which, judiciously used, have effected wonderful cures, have, when badly prepared and administered, been productive of the most fatal consequences. Mercury, antimony, sulphur, arsenic, zinc, bismuth, iron, copper,—have, under various disguises and preparations, promised to relieve all the ills “that flesh is heir to.”

*Illi robur, et æs triplex
Circa pectus erat, qui fragilem truci
Commisit pelago ratem
Primus——*

But he must have had a heart of adamant,

Audax omnia perpeti,

who first dared to swallow arsenic, hemlock, mercury, and that medicine which gives such a leaden, lurid, livid, aspect to the human countenance, — nitrate of quicksilver.

There are now about fifty vegetable medicines and twelve mineral medicines in use. It may be doubted, of which the greatest weight is consumed. Salts, sulphur, and magnesia, may be weighed against bark, rhubarb, chamomile, &c.

Mineral *waters* came into fashion in the middle of the seventeenth century, and, under the recommendations of Drs. Guidot, Underhill, Wynter, Madan, and the great Meade, have sustained the delusive hopes of many an invalid, by their boasted efficacy in various parts of the world to the present day. But alas! many of them have, like all mortal things, experienced the caprice of human opinion, and fallen from the highest esteem and celebrity, to disrepute or total abandonment.

Of all strange remedies, that it ever entered into the head of man to devise, was that of the stomach-brush, invented by one of the physicians in the days of Charles the Second. Heister gives a minute account of it and the manner of using it. When arrived in the stomach, he says, “it is to be drawn up and down, and through the œsophagus, like the sucker in a syringe, till the morbid matter be, at last, wholly extracted.” This contrivance is greatly extolled, and said to prolong life to a great age, especially if practised once a week or fortnight.

Sinking persons are said to catch at straws. It is thus with invalids who look for safety from every new discovery, with little examination of its probable power of effecting any relief.

The nature and power of the magnetic fluid had long attracted attention. It was, therefore, thought an excellent subject for medical experiments; and, it was soon found out to be a sovereign remedy for gout, rheumatism, and all nervous disorders. Many gouty patients carried magnetized steel in their pockets; but the most successful application of it, if you could believe the attesting patients, was in the shape of Mr. Yeldall's magnetic belt, and Mr. Perkins's tractors. Mr. Yeldall exhibited his belt, and *patients*, in a handsomely-furnished room, in Red Lion Square; and the marvellous stories told by them of its cures, not a little astonished me, and the physician who accompanied me, at the wonderful effects of imagination, effrontery, or delusion.

The tractors were made on the strength of a new and more perplexing electric discovery,—*galvanism*; and were supposed to owe their efficacy to a secret combination of metals. They produced a considerable revenue to the first venders, till Dr. Haygarth proved, that the same effects might be produced at about a thousandth part of the expense. They have now experienced the fate of the *elixir vitæ*, the *arcanum corallium*, the *jus viperinum*, and the *oil of swallows*.

Chemistry, to which medical science owes so much, has (like other things in this life) had its attendant evils, and furnished not a few empirics, who have pretended to extract the soul, and the quintessence, and the elixir, and the spirit, and the life, and the balm of drugs—and by mysterious arts, so to combine them as to produce infallible remedies for incurable complaints.

THE next species of quackery I shall mention is, that of the touching and rubbing quackery. It is passing wonderful that the touching quackery, for the king's evil, should have continued so long to have deluded the ignorant, and have been practised with awful solemnity, by sovereigns. It was performed solemnly at Whitehall, by Charles and James the Second, omitted by William the Third, but occasionally practised by Queen Anne; (Dr. Johnson was touched by her.) A curious and minute account of the whole ceremony, is given in Evelyn's *Diary*.

A modern author says, the cure of scrofula by the royal touch is the most singular instance of quackery in the history of superstition. Lord Bacon says, that “imagination is next akin to

miracle—a working faith.” There was seemingly some of both, and a little money to boot, to keep this remedy in fashion; and as each patient touched a bit of gold, we may suppose, in this, as in other complaints, that some were cured of the king’s evil who never had any other evil but that of poverty, which brought more patients and more fame to these royal practitioners than they deserved.

The curing of the king’s evil (says Aubrey) by the touch of the king, does much puzzle our philosophers; for whether the kings were of the house of York or Lancaster, it did the cure for the most part. ’Tis true, indeed, at the touching, there are prayers read; but perhaps, neither the king attends them, nor his chaplains.

The French kings pretend to a greater antiquity in this miraculous gift, than our kings: the first of whom that touched for this complaint was Edward the Confessor, in 1060; whereas Mezeray says, King Clovis cured one of his favourites, in 481. This gift, however, seems to have fallen to decay in the time of Louis the Eleventh; for he having an apoplexy, sent for a famous man to cure him, by the name of Francis of Poul. Francis unhappily had the evil; but, alas, the saint could not cure the

King; and, what was equally unfortunate, the King could not cure the saint. Our King George the First had the good sense not to pretend to this marvellous power, but the French kings kept up the farce till 1776. Louis the Fifteenth touched no less than two thousand persons, and his predecessor two thousand five hundred. The kings of Scotland did not pretend to this gift; but, when James the Sixth came to the throne of England, the virtue straight appeared in him.

Charles the Second touched 23,621 persons for the king's evil, in the course of five years. Indeed England has always been the paradise of quacks.

In Charles the Second's reign, a curious trial of one Rosewell for high-treason, in denying this miraculous power of the royal touch, took place before Judge Jefferies, in 1684. The criminal was found guilty; but afterwards pardoned.

Long after this power was supposed to have ceased in the King, it was conceived to exist in the hand of a hanged felon; and many now living may remember this remedy to have been applied, under the gallows. Dr. Paris, in his *Pharmacologia*, which gives much curious information on the subject of quackery, says, that the patients

who were submitted to the touch of the royal hand, were selected, as having little evil in them, or being already in a convalescent state:—See his ingenious distinctions between scepticism, superstition, and credulity.

It was also assumed by private quacks,—such as Valentine Greatrakes, whose fame was so great, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, as to occasion several pamphlets, discussing whether his wonderful cures were miraculous. To him, succeeded in the same line of manual practice John Leverett, gardener, who declared, that in touching thirty or forty a day, he felt so much goodness go from him, that he was as much fatigued, as in digging eight roods of ground! He was followed by Samuel Scott, who was also the seventh son of a seventh son; who performed wonderful cures by touching for the king's evil, and tumours and wens, when a child; but as he grew up to be a man, he lost the virtue. This reminds me of what I heard in the Isle of Mull, of a boy who had enjoyed the privilege of second sight, till his father *whipt* it out of him.

Another branch of the *manual* practice of medicine, is that called *Animal Magnetism*. This

quackery was first broached at Vienna, by Father Held, in 1774, who pretended to cure all diseases by means of a sympathetic affection between the sick person and the operator. The remedy was supposed to depend upon the motions of the fingers and the features of the latter ; the operator placing himself immediately before the invalid whose eyes were to be fixed on *his*, and performing a number of antic and unmeaning changes, accompanied by various grimaces, or inflections of the different muscles of the face. This rarely failed to excite a certain degree of apprehension in the mind of the sick, which, by creating a new action of the system, often frightened them into convalescence. That such effects may have been produced among the credulous and timid, we shall not controvert ; but, on the other hand, it is asserted that numbers have been so overcome by terror and fatigue, that consequences highly dangerous, and sometimes fatal, were induced.

Notwithstanding the obvious folly of the pursuit, there were found many gentlemen of great respectability and talents among the followers of this absurdity ; hence a certain degree of credit was established, and there were not wanting persons

foolish enough to certify many cases, and to give a celebrity which was in a short time found to be misapplied. It is a lamentable case, that throughout the world impositions of this nature are always tolerated long enough to answer the purposes of the fabricator, and encourage others in similar deceptions.

Some who have condescended to bestow deep speculation on these subjects, have considered that the boasted effects of the metallic tractors were more allied to this mysterious operation of *animal* magnetism than to Galvanism.

Mesmer, a physician, who had written on the influence of the stars on the human body, adopted this quackery of animal magnetism from Held, and added so much nonsense of his own to it, that he exposed himself to great condemnation from Held and Dr. Ingenhousz. After travelling through Germany, and appealing in vain to the Academy of Sciences in Berlin, in support of his system, he went to Paris. Here he practised with such success, and had so many patients, that he was obliged to take pupils, the most successful of whom, Mr. Deslon, is said to have realized a fortune of a hundred thousand pounds by this prac-

tice. In 1779, Mesmer published a book on his art, and promised a larger work on the subject, which should make as great a revolution in philosophy as it had already done in medicine.

His success threatened to ruin the faculty, many of whom, with Dr. Franklin, formed a committee of inquiry into its merits. Mesmer refused to communicate with them; but Deslon, less scrupulous, explained his principles in nine positions. He asserted first that animal magnetism was an universal fluid, constituting an absolute *plenum* in nature, and the medium of all mutual influence between celestial bodies, and betwixt the earth and animal bodies. Second, that it is the most subtile fluid in nature. Third, the nerves are particularly affected by it. Fourth, the human body is like the poles of a magnet. Fifth, it is communicable from one body to another, animate or inanimate. Sixth, it can operate at great distances, without the intervention of any body. Seventh, it is increased and reflected by mirrors, and is communicated, increased, and reflected by sound; and may also be accumulated, concentrated, and transported. Eighth, *all* bodies, notwithstanding its universality, are not affected by it, and some very few

destroy it. Ninth, by means of this fluid, nervous diseases are cured immediately, and others mediately; and, in short, its virtues extend to the universal cure and preservation of mankind.

From this theory, Mesmer and Deslon concluded there was but one disease and one cure, and that cure was magnetism.

Deslon exhibited his patients to the commissioners. They each carried an iron rod in his hand, were bound together with a connecting rope, and surrounded by iron rods, supposed to concentrate the magnetic fluid. Mr. Deslon played to them on the piano-forte, and then applied rods to the parts affected with disease, and pressed the lower part of the stomach. Some seemed little or not at all affected by it; others laughed, and perspired, and expectorated, and declared they felt extreme heats in various parts of the body. Many women, but very few men, had convulsions, which Deslon called their crisis.

The committee, dissatisfied with the public exhibition, resolved to have a private trial, and found that it had nothing to do with Galvanism,—that it did not affect themselves, or the better-educated patients. They blindfolded patients, and made

them suppose the operation was performed on them, and found that they declared they experienced the same effects as when really performed. From these and other circumstances, they inferred that the practice was an imposture; and concluded their report by saying that it is one fact more to be consigned to the history of errors and illusions of the human mind, and a signal instance of the power of imagination.

Mesmer complained to the parliament of the report of the commissioners. The parliament ordered him to reveal the mystery of his doctrine, —but in vain.

“The modern animal magnetizers of Paris, pretended that when they had thrown any one into a state of what they were pleased to call ecstasy, the body became insensible to suffering; and, but a very few years ago, they circulated and attached great importance to the case of an old lady of sixty-four, who, having been thrown by them into a state of ecstasy, underwent, they say, the severe operation of having a cancer cut out of her neck, without experiencing the slightest pain. During the whole of the operation, adds the statement, she exhibited no sense of suffering, and even laughed like a

person being tickled, exclaiming, *Finissez, ne me chatouillez pas*. Previous to each operation she was magnetized with perfect success, and the cure was complete*.”

Moreton, in his entertaining *Travels in Russia*, 1827—29, informs us, “that the low state in which the medical profession is in Odessa, will be sufficiently proved by the fact that the chief medical officer of the hospital there is an advocate and practiser of animal magnetism, and is said to treat the majority of his patients with this specific.”

General Sabanief, not finding relief from this operation, applied to Mr. Moreton for advice in a liver-complaint. He prescribed for him; but immediately after his departure, the former physician paid the general a visit, and strongly advised him to allow his own mode of treatment to be continued, declaring it would be dangerous if he did not, it being necessary to extract the magnetism gradually.

The nervous and the credulous were the persons on whom the professors of this quackery employed their boasted magnetism. They pretended it could only avail with certain individuals; and when they

* *Literary Gazette*, June 14, 1829.

met with one on whom they could not impose, they declared him not a *fit subject* for the experiment.

Magnetism, after this investigation by the committee, was deemed an imposture by every man of sense. It was afterwards introduced into this country ; and in the hands of Du Mainanduc, Louterbourg, and, above all, Miss Prescott, deluded many credulous invalids, till the world grew tired of the folly.

The transfusion of blood was an early piece of quackery, which, when first introduced to notice, promised to operate like Medea's cauldron, and convert old men into young ; but as one of the first operators, Dr. Denys, was thought to have killed one of the first patients by it, in 1668, the practice was forbidden, except under express directions of the faculty. It has attracted some attention lately from the writings of Dr. Blundell, and Prevost, and Dumas, who, in the *Bibliothèque Universelle*, condemn the use of it with human beings, and state that it can only be employed with animals, where the globular particles of the blood are similar ; some particles being elliptical, especially in different birds.

Pilular quacks have been some of the most successful; and by pretending to concentrate all the virtues of the vegetable and mineral world in little globular morsels, to be swallowed easily, and without disgust, with safety and certainty of cure; and by making the very walls speak of their wonderful efficacy, have reaped a rich harvest of profits.

At last, without the least pretence of skill,
Ward's grown a famed physician by his pill.

Lionel Lockyer's pills cured all the world, and made himself immortal. The astrological physicians ordered pills to be taken when the sun was in *Pisces*. Cold pills were given for hot diseases; and hot pills for the cold. George James's *Friendly Pills*, were made of the true tincture of the sun.

One of the most successful quacks in this country, was a bone-setting quack, Mrs. Mapp, a sister of Lavinia Fenton, (Polly Peachum,) afterwards Duchess of Bolton. She succeeded so well as to drive in her coach and six, though without any education or knowledge.

Dr. Myersbach prospered with his pretended diagnosis of all disorders from the human fluids,

till completely exposed by Dr. Lettsom, who says, "In every case in which I have followed Myersbach, my heart has bled over the follies of my fellow-creatures."

Myersbach's was an old piece of nonsense; but as Hume has remarked, mankind are constantly deceived by the same tricks played over and over again. Human credulity, indeed, seems wholly incurable; and, in spite of all warning, we see one generation after another, with their eyes wide open, walk into the same gulf of fraud, quackery, and imposture.

Few species of quackery are more absurd than those of the cosmetic, capillary, tonsorial, and blacking quacks. The seductive titles and fascinating eloquence, in verse and prose, by which they have recommended their articles, have filled the coffers of many an inventor and vendor. Who can resist such captivating names as the *Baume de Vénus*, the *Olympian Dew*, *Celestial Cream*, *Pommade de Vie*, *Circassian Oil*, *Paphian Dye*, or the *Tricosian Fluid*, which must be used with extreme caution with gloves, lest the hair should grow on the palms of the hand? Who would not prefer that soap which lights up the face with per-

petual smiles, or that razor-strop, which, according to Mr. Packwood's asseveration, "gives an agreeable surprise to the whole countenance?" Who would not use that blacking which can convert a boot into a mirror, on the advertisement of which, we see a beautiful representation of a gentleman shaving.

For now the very walls are quacking,
Martin's, Hunt's, and Warren's blacking!

Lapides clamabunt!

I might now speak of *legal* quacks, for the law is not without them. It has also its mysterious language, its injuries and remedies, and with ignorant sciolists, like their medical brethren, causes often more complaints than it relieves; but law is confessedly a dry subject.

I might also mention political quacks, of which class the world has assuredly seen abundance in ancient and in modern time;—in Greece, in Rome, in Germany, in France, and in England. Witness the labours of Joseph the Second, the law of Abbé Sièyes, with his pigeon-holes of constitutions,—of the Fifth-Monarchy Men,—of Tom Paine,—and of many others: *quod nunc perscribere longum est.*

Some might be inclined to add so of metaphysical and astronomical quacks, and consider the innumerable Greek, Roman, German, French, and English metaphysicians as worthy of enrolment in this list, as well as some even of astronomers,—such as Brown, Partridge, and Mrs. Martin, who thought Sir Isaac Newton a “pretty cleverish sort of a man.”

But I pass on to the literary quacks. *Commencer par le commencement.* Let us first consider the quackery of seductive and delusive names and title-pages. The assumption of Greek names was a very common species of literary quackery; as those of Melanchthon, Erasmus, &c., something analogous to that of our English singers, who Italianize their names: both on the supposition that on that account, the former must be more learned, and the latter finer musicians. Juvenal was disgusted by the Hellenisms of his day.

. . . . Non possum ferre, Quirites,
Græcam urbem !

A conjuror of modern days, to recommend his superiority in the art, called himself King of the Conjurors; but another professor of the same art, to raise himself still higher in the scale of estima-

tion, entitled himself Emperor of the Conjurors. An author, thus, well aware of the popularity of the celebrated work intituled simply *The Spectator*, gave his book the more presumptuous title of *The Universal Spectator*. *The Rambler*, *The Idler*, *The Lounger*, *The World*, must be allowed to be all seductive and delusive titles; but as to *The Idler*, *The Lounger*, *The Rambler*, he who looked into them for loose thoughts calculated only to gratify an idle and ungoverned imagination, would be properly disappointed, as those zealous advocates for a reform of our parliament were with a moral work, which was eagerly purchased from its title, *Reform or Ruin*.

The *Garden of Nuts*, the *Golden Apples*, and the *Pomegranate-Flower*, are inviting treatises on abstruse points of theology, and religious ceremonies. Dr. Jortin mentions a curious title of a theological work, called *Labia Dormientium*—the Lips of the Sleepers,—from the ninth verse of the Canticles of Solomon, “Like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.”

Some titles were addressed to the taste of a particular party of fanatics, and thus secured a sale

of the work; such were, *Matches lighted at the Divine Fire; The Gun of Penitence; The Shop of the Spiritual Apothecary; The Bank of Faith; Sixpenny-worth of Divine Spirit;* and this elaborate one—*Some fine Biskets baked in the Oven of Charity, carefully conserved for the Chickens of the Church, the Sparrows of the Spirit, and the Sweet Swallows of Salvation.*

A huntsman to the King of Spain, wrote a work on hunting, with the title, *Of the Origin and Dignity of our Royal House;* Dr. Chanterene, to pass off some moral essays, entitled them, *The Education of a Prince;* Mr. Tooke's profound metaphysics and philology, bear the enticing title of *Diversions of Purley.* We have, *Palaces of Pleasure, Palaces of Honour, Palaces of Eloquence, Temples of Memory, Theatres of Human Life,* and *Amphitheatres of Providence.* Some works take the captivating guise of novelty; a *New method of learning Grammar, New Elements of Geometry, a New Art of Cookery, &c. &c.*

It is often with the titles of books, (says Mr. D'Israeli, to whom I am indebted for most of these titles,) as with those painted representations exhibited by the keepers of wild-beasts; where, in

general, the picture is larger, more curious and interesting, than the enclosed animal.

There is a French work entitled *Charlataneria Eruditorum*, which gives a full detail of the quackeries of the learned, of the pompous titles of their books, of the arrogant pretensions of authors, of their prefatory puffs, in prose and verse, (a very common piece of ostentation in old works,) and of their audacious professions of sincerity. Such were those of Varillas the French historian, which made him pass for a writer who had penetrated into the inmost recesses of the cabinet: but the public were at length undeceived, and were convinced, that the historical anecdotes which Varillas put off for authentic facts, had no foundation, being wholly of his own invention: though he endeavoured to make them pass for realities, by affected citation of titles, instructions, letters, memoirs, and relations, all of them imaginary. It is well known that Vertot drew upon his imagination frequently, to save the trouble of the dull work of investigating historical truths, and painted his sieges from fancy.

Gregory Leti used to cull the choicest stories from the novel-writers, and fit them on the real

dramatis personæ of his histories. Charles the Second, understanding that Leti had an intention of writing memoirs of the Court, cautioned him against giving offence. "Sir," said Leti, "if I were as wise as Solomon, I could not avoid it." "Then be as wise," (rejoined the King,) "and write Proverbs, and not histories."

Of literary forgeries we have a copious abundance. This is the most condemnable of literary quackeries.

Forgeries entitled *Testamens Politiques*, of Colbert, Mazarine, and other great Ministers, issued from the Dutch press.

Numerous have been the forgeries of lost works, such as those of Anniius of Viterbo, of the writings of Sanchoniatho, Berosus, and Manetho. At their first publication, universal joy was diffused among the learned; suspicion soon rose, and detection followed.

In 1774, Joseph Vella, an Italian, pretended he had discovered the lost books of Livy, in an Arabic volume, which had been stolen by a Frenchman from the shelves of St. Sophia. He was desired to publish these long-desired books, and Lady Spencer, then in Italy, offered to defray

the expenses. He had the effrontery, by way of specimen, to edit an Italian translation of the 60th book, but that book took up no more than one page! A Professor of Oriental Literature in Prussia, introduced it in his work, never suspecting the fraud, but it was nothing more than the epitome of a page of Florus. He afterwards went to Naples, pretended that he had an Arabic history of Sicily, and was loaded with honours and pensions by the court. He published a pretended translation of it in four volumes, in quarto; but was finally detected, and condemned to imprisonment.

A learned antiquary, (says Mr. Swinburne,) in order to favour the pretensions of the church, in a great law-suit, forged deeds and inscriptions which he buried in the ground, where he knew they would shortly be dug up again. Upon being found, he published engravings of them and gave explanations of their unknown characters, making them out to be so many authentic proofs and evidences of the assertions of the clergy.

The Morocco Ambassador purchased of him a copper bracelet of Fatima, which he proved by the

Arabic inscription and many certificates to be genuine, and found among the ruins of the Alhambra, with other treasures of its last King, who had hidden them there, in hopes of better days. This famous bracelet turned out afterwards to be the work of his own hands, and made out of an old brass candlestick.

Many author-quacks, have sold their names to be prefixed to works they never read, and some have prefixed the names of others to their own writings, for a certain remuneration. Sir John Hill is said to have contracted to translate Swammerdam's work on Insects, for fifty guineas. After his agreement with the bookseller, he perfectly recollected that he did not understand a word of the Dutch language, nor did there exist a French translation. The work, however, was not the less to be done, for this small obstacle. Sir John bargained with another translator, for twenty-five guineas. The second translator was precisely in the same situation as the first: as ignorant, though not so well paid, as the knight. *He* rebargained with a third, who perfectly understood the original, for twelve guineas. So that the translators who could *not*

translate, feasted on venison and turtle, whilst the modest drudge, whose name never appeared to the world, broke in patience his daily bread.

Some authors have practised the cheating quackery of announcing a variety of titles of works as preparing for the press, but of which nothing but the titles have been written.

Paschal, historiographer of France, had a reason for these ingenious inventions; he continually announced such titles, that his pension for writing on the history of France might not be stopped. When he died, his historical labours did not exceed six pages.

The quackery of publishing pretended voyages and travels has prevailed at various times and places. Gemelli Carëri, a Neapolitan nobleman, for many years never quitted his chamber; confined by a tedious indisposition, he amused himself with writing a voyage round the world, giving characters of men, and descriptions of the countries as if he had really visited them. Du Halde, who has written so voluminous an account of China, compiled it from the memoirs of the missionaries, and never travelled ten leagues from Paris in his life;

though he appears from his writings to be very familiar with Chinese scenery.

Damberger's *Travels*, in the interior, from the Cape to the north of Africa, not long ago produced a great sensation, and the public were duped ; they proved to be the ideal voyages made by a member of the German Grub-street, about his own garret. The *Travels* of Gaudentio di Lucca, written by Bishop Berkeley, and those of Psalmanazar, in Formosa, were received with implicit credit on their first publication, though now known to be the works of pure invention. Travellers who fly rapidly through countries, practise a frequent quackery in publishing long accounts of various places and people, evidently collected from the idle reports and absurd traditions of the ignorant vulgar, from whom only they could have received those relations which we see accumulated with such undiscerning credulity.

We have had also our poetical and critical quacks ; witness the impositions of Macpherson, of Chatterton, of Ireland, and of the infamous Lauder, who attempted to defraud our immortal Milton of his fair fame by feigned quotations from

pretended works of his own, from which he charged him to have stolen many of his finest thoughts. It is well known that this imposture was detected, and justly exposed, and severely chastised, by Douglass, bishop of Salisbury.

We are all now heartily sick of quackery. It is a hydra-headed monster, and when one of its heads is cut off, another quickly springs up. Human fears and hopes are such excellent patrons, that we can hardly hope ever to extirpate it; but from the general diffusion of knowledge and science, we have at present no reason to apprehend that any very pernicious quackery can long continue to delude the ignorant. Magnetic belts, animal magnetism, mud-baths, and tractors, have successively flourished and decayed; and our present fashionable panacea, the *Blue Pill* will in time find its level of estimation.

Our literary critics are too numerous and sharp-sighted, to permit any literary quackery to live long, without being held up to ridicule and contempt. To this I might be subject myself, did I not confess that I have taken many of my illustrations from books that all may read, but which I

hope all may have forgotten as completely as I had, when I sought for them to compile this essay. It will scarcely be expected that the obvious moral it suggests should be largely insisted on; we shall all agree in despising and condemning the folly of unfounded assumption, and vain pretension, of every sort; which, sooner or later, must be discovered, and deserves to be exposed.

THE END.

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